



West Nile Virus

West Nile Virus (WNV) is primarily a disease of birds. It can affect nearly any type of bird, people, horses, mules, squirrels, alligators and some other animals. WNV is spread by infected mosquitoes to people, but it is not contagious from person to person. Most people infected with WNV show either no symptoms of illness or only mild non-specific symptoms. About 20 percent of those infected show any symptoms, typically seen 3-15 days after the mosquito bite. Symptoms in people range from mild (slight headache, body aches, rash and low grade fever) to extreme (neurological disease - swelling of the brain or brain tissue, paralysis and coma) and in rare cases, death. Contact your doctor immediately if you develop any of the severe symptoms. Recovery can be prolonged. Once persons contract WNV, they are immune to it.

Preventing mosquito bites will prevent WNV infection. Mosquitoes that carry WNV are most common in the late warmer summer months (late June through late September) and are most active during dawn and dusk. Limit outdoor activity during these times of the day or wear protective clothing if practical. Use an insect repellent with DEET or picaridin if you will be outdoors for an extended period of time.

Make your home mosquito-proof by making sure window and door screens are "bug-tight." Use yellow or fluorescent bulbs instead of white lights; they don't repel mosquitoes, but attract fewer of them. Use a larvicide with Bti in standing water that cannot be drained to eliminate mosquito breeding grounds, including tree holes. Check with your county extension office or local health department about the availability of Bti larvicide in your area.

KDHE recommends the following to reduce the risk of WNV:

- Use an insect repellent on the skin. Products that contain DEET, Picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus are effective in repelling mosquitoes. Follow the label directions for all repellents closely.
- Wear protective clothing when practical.
- Limit outdoor activities at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- Remove standing water - where mosquitoes breed (i.e. clogged gutters or unused tires).
- Use larvicide with Bti in water that cannot be drained or removed.
- Change water every three days in birdbaths, pet bowls, and wading pools.
- Mosquito proof your home by repairing window screens and screen doors.

For more information, visit the Kansas Department of Health and Environment West Nile Virus Web page at: www.kdheks.gov/westnile/.

A comprehensive fact sheet on mosquitoes is available for download at:
<http://www.oznet.k-state.edu/library/ENTML2/MF2571.pdf>